

12 June 1964

DCI/US
File Low P-20k

MEMORANDUM FOR THE AD/CI

SUBJECT: US Air Force Attack in Phong Savan Area

1. The US Air Force mission launched on 9 June to strike at an anti-aircraft installation northwest of Xieng Khouang Ville also--inadvertently--mounted a second attack against a similar position near Phong Savan, approximately 11 miles to the northwest.
2. According to a message from ^{MACV TO} CTINCPAC, the 8 F-100 fighter-bombers had flown to the authorized target area in two flights of four aircraft each. While preparing for the attack run, the two flights became separated. The second flight, after orbiting to relocate the target, apparently mistook a similar appearing fortification in the Phong Savan area for the battery at Xieng Khouang Ville. An attack was carried out, apparently with some success. The pilots of the second flight, when confronted with photography of the Xieng Khouang ville installation during a re-interrogation, acknowledged they had hit the wrong target.
3. There had been prior indications that an error had been made. Only a small number of bomb craters (six or seven) were noted in post-strike photography over Xieng Khouang, leaving approximately fifteen bombs unaccounted for. Also, pilots of the accompanying reconnaissance aircraft noted smoke to the northwest of Xieng Khouang Ville (in the direction of Phong Savan). Peiping Radio, biased but often factually correct on items of this nature, on 9 June charged that "six US jet fighters" had attacked the area of Khang Khay and Phong Savan, claiming 12 bombs had been dropped.
4. Other information filtering in from the military supports Communist charges that other flak suppression missions--with relatively little ordnance expenditure--had been mounted against positions in the Xieng Khouang Ville-Khang Khay area on 7 June. A report indicated that a strike was launched from Thailand, on 7 June against probable Pathet Lao targets, but full information on this strike is not available.

5. Meanwhile, Lao Air Force attacks by T-28 aircraft are continuing. An attack yesterday against Prince Souphannouvong's headquarters at Khang Khay reportedly resulted in considerable damage to official buildings in the area. Although we are unaware of attacks scheduled for today, a dissident neutralist message intercepted at noon (Vientiane time) reported that "Khang Khay is burning."

6. Much of the information in the above paragraphs was obtained informally by the Agency liaison officer at the National Military Command Center and should be with discretion.

HANDLED